



Social Media Roundup

## **Military voters and social media**



**WWW.ARMY.MIL**  
THE OFFICIAL HOMEPAGE OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

# Agenda

On June 19, the Department of Defense published a set of guidelines for military personnel outlining what is allowed and what is restricted when it comes to participating in political activities. This Social Media Roundup discusses these guidelines and highlights the guidance dealing specifically with social media activity.

- Introduction
- DoD guidelines
- Importance of voting
- Social media guidance
- General do's and don'ts for military voters
- Related links



**WWW.ARMY.MIL**

THE OFFICIAL HOMEPAGE OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY



# Introduction

- In January, a 28-year-old Army reservist breached military protocol when he took to the stage in support of Ron Paul while in uniform. It's important to know what political activities you can engage in as an Active Duty Soldier, both in public and on social media.
- To help Soldiers better understand what they are authorized to do in regards to political activity, the DoD published a set of guidelines (<http://tinyurl.com/c5bshlw>).
- This guidance, and the Public Affairs Guidance for Political Campaigns and Elections (<http://tinyurl.com/d9ovwxh>) helps shed more light on a complex issue during this political season.

## A soldier, Ron Paul and political opinion

By [Jason Ukman](#)



Soldier throws his support behind Ron Paul

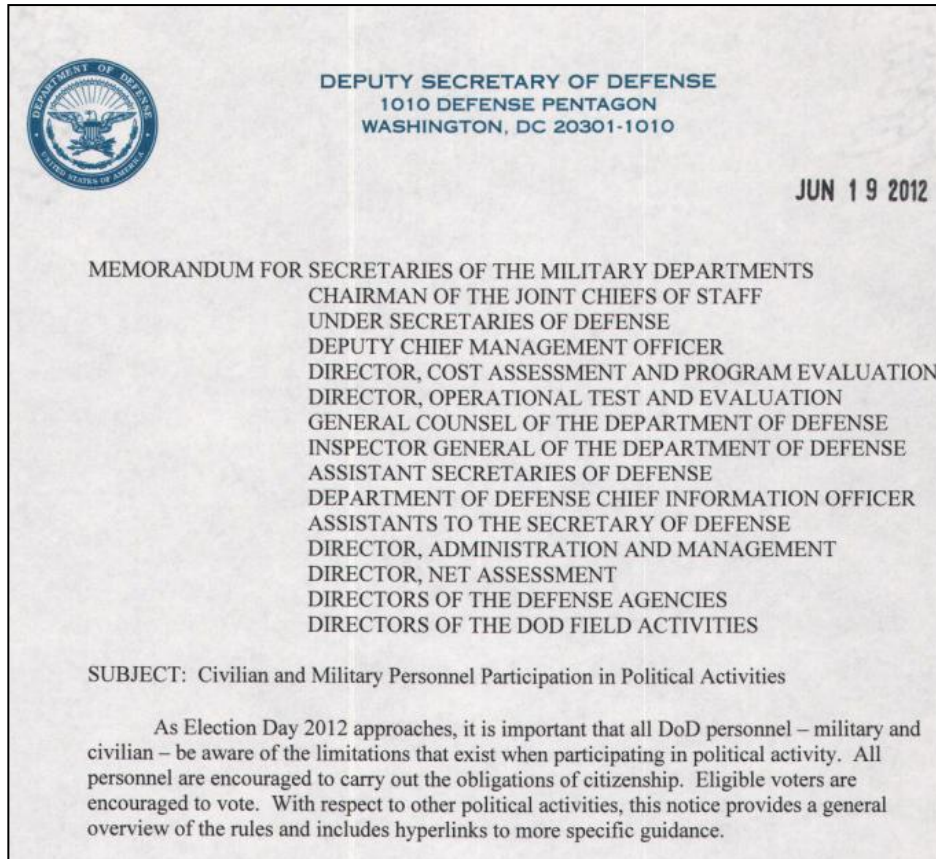


**WWW.ARMY.MIL**

THE OFFICIAL HOMEPAGE OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY



# DoD guidelines



The guidelines for civilian and military personnel participation in political activities can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/c5bshlw>

- The set of guidelines published by the DoD details what political activities are authorized for Active Duty personnel and DoD civilians.
- The memo states, "Generally, all service members are prohibited from acting in any manner that gives rise to the inference of approval or endorsement of candidates for political office by DOD or the U.S. military."
- The document briefly mentions social media, but the majority of social media and political activities guidance can be found in the Public Affairs Guidance for Political Campaigns and Elections (<http://tinyurl.com/d9ovwxh>).



**WWW.ARMY.MIL**

THE OFFICIAL HOMEPAGE OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY





# The importance of voting

- While the main intent of the DoD document is to outline what political activities are authorized for DoD Civilians and Active Duty personnel, the document also discusses how important it is that all DoD personnel get out and vote.

*“As Election Day 2012 approaches, it is important that all DoD personnel – military and civilian – be aware of the limitations that exist when participating in political activity. All personnel are encouraged to carry out the obligations of citizenship. Eligible voters are encouraged to vote.”*

*-DoD memorandum  
Civilian and Military Personnel  
Participation in Political Activities*



**WWW.ARMY.MIL**

THE OFFICIAL HOMEPAGE OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY



# Social media guidance

- While the DoD memo briefly mentions social media use when it comes to political activities, the majority of the DoD guidance can be found in the Public Affairs Guidance for Political Campaigns and Elections document.  
(<http://tinyurl.com/d9ovwxh>)
- The next few slides highlight the three major pieces of social media guidance offered by the DoD regarding political activity on social media.



# Social media guidance

- 9.4.2. – “An Active Duty (AD) Service member may generally express his or her own personal views on public issues or political candidates via social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, or personal Blogs, much the same as they would be permitted to write a letter to the editor of a newspaper. If a social media site/post identifies the member as on AD (or if the member is otherwise reasonably identifiable as an AD member), then the entry will clearly and prominently state that the views expressed are those of the individual only and not those of the Department of Defense (or Department of Homeland Security for members of the Coast Guard). An AD member may not, however, engage in any partisan political activity. Further, an AD member may not post or make direct links to a political party, partisan political candidate, campaign, group, or cause because such activity is the equivalent of distributing literature on behalf of those entities or individuals, which is prohibited by reference (c). Moreover, an AD member may not post or comment on the Facebook pages or “tweet” at the Twitter accounts of a political party, or partisan political candidate, campaign, group, or cause, as such activity would be engaging in partisan political activity through a medium sponsored or controlled by said entities.”

Source: <http://tinyurl.com/d9ovwxh>



**WWW.ARMY.MIL**

THE OFFICIAL HOMEPAGE OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY



# Social media guidance

- 9.4.3 – “An AD member may become a “friend” of, or “like,” the Facebook page, or “follow” the Twitter account of a political party or partisan candidate, campaign, group, or cause. However, AD members will refrain from engaging in activities with respect to those entities’ social media accounts that would constitute political activity. This would include, for example, suggesting that others “like,” “friend,” or “follow” the political party, partisan political candidate, campaign, group, or cause, or forwarding an invitation or solicitation from said entities to others.”



**WWW.ARMY.MIL**  
THE OFFICIAL HOMEPAGE OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

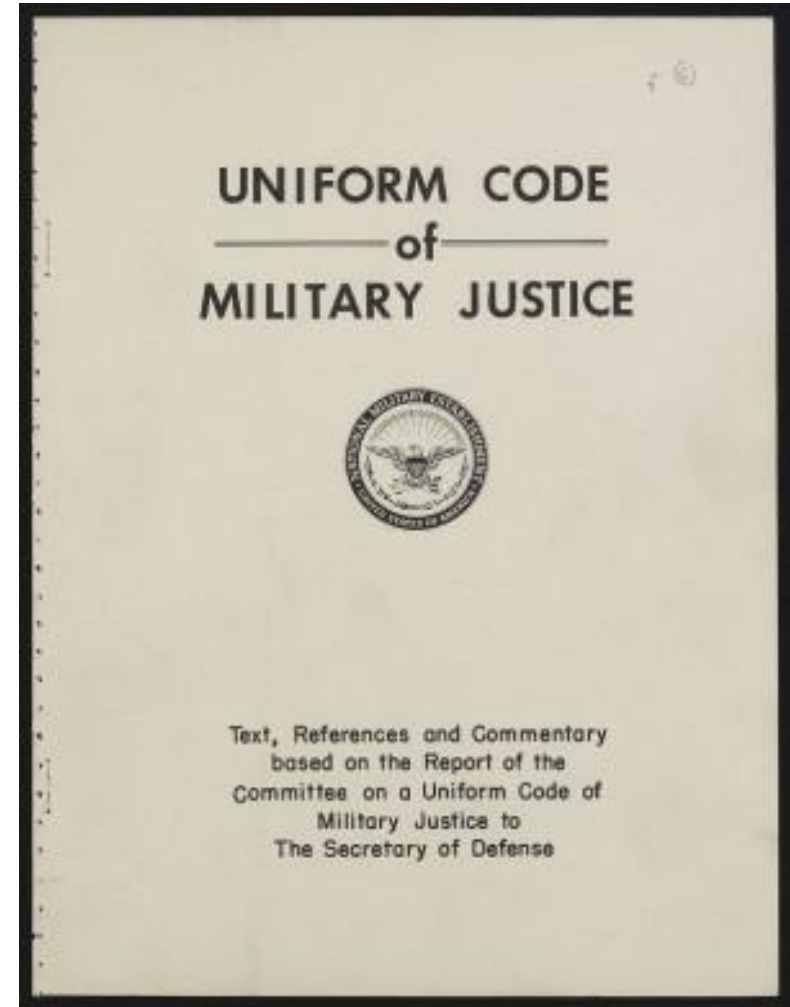
Source: <http://tinyurl.com/d9ovwxh>





# Social media guidance

- 9.4.4 – “AD members may be subject to additional restrictions based on the Joint Ethics Regulation, the Uniform Code of Military Justice, and service-specific rules, to include rules governing the use of government resources and governmental communications systems, such as email and internet usage.



Source: <http://tinyurl.com/d9ovwxh>



**WWW.ARMY.MIL**

THE OFFICIAL HOMEPAGE OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY



# General do's and don'ts for military voters

- Social media is just a small piece of the political activity guidance offered by the DoD. The following do's and don'ts are also included in the memo.

Active Duty service members MAY

- Vote
- Express personal opinions about political candidates and issues, but not as a representative of the U.S. military
- Join a political club and attend partisan and nonpartisan political meetings, debates, conventions, or activities as a spectator, when not in uniform
- Sign a petition to place a candidate's name on an official election ballot
- Make monetary contributions to a political campaign or party
- Display a political bumper sticker on a personal vehicle
- Write a letter to the editor or post a blog, stating a personal opinion (the opinion must specify that the state views are those of the individual and not of the Department and may not solicit votes for or against a partisan candidate)
- Participate in nonpartisan activities that are not specifically identified with a political party, such as a referendum question or a municipal ordinance on for example, tax or environmental issues.



**WWW.ARMY.MIL**

THE OFFICIAL HOMEPAGE OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

Source: <http://tinyurl.com/c5bshlw>



# General do's and don'ts for military voters

Active Duty service members **MAY NOT**

- Actively participate in partisan political activities, including fundraisers (mere attendance does not constitute participation)
- Serve as an officer of a political club
- Speak at a partisan gathering or participate in any radio or television programs (including organized blog debates or discussions) that advocate for or against a political party, candidate, or cause
- Seek nomination of candidacy for civil office (see DODD 1344.10 for limited exceptions)
- Display a political sign, poster, banner, or other campaign material visible to the public at one's residence on a military installation (including homes located in privatized housing)
- Attend political events as an official representative of the Armed Forces unless authorized by the Service Secretary concerned



**WWW.ARMY.MIL**

THE OFFICIAL HOMEPAGE OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

Source: <http://tinyurl.com/c5bshlw>



## Related links

- Video: 2011-12 Adjutant General voting PSA (<http://tinyurl.com/c24zetz>)
- STAND-TO! The Army Voting Assistance Program (<http://tinyurl.com/6q6sb9b>)
- Hatch Act (<http://www.osc.gov/hatchact.htm>)
- Federal Voting Assistance Program (<http://www.fvap.gov/>)
- U.S. Army Voting on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/ArmyVoting>)
- Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces (<http://tinyurl.com/cv8aup>)
- DOD releases do's, don'ts for military voters (<http://tinyurl.com/7abrprj>)





# Contact information

Have questions? Please feel free to reach out to us at the Online and Social Media Division

Email:  
Ocpa.osmd@us.army.mil

To review and download past editions of the Social Media Roundup, visit our Slideshare site at: <http://www.slideshare.net/usarmysocialmedia>. All Social Media Roundups are authorized to be distributed to a broader audience.

**7/11/2012**

**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
PENTAGON**



**WWW.ARMY.MIL**  
THE OFFICIAL HOMEPAGE OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

